"THE TAX ON MOUSTACHES." $1,500.00 Prize Story.

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# The Black Cat

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## January 1899

**"The Tax on Moustaches."** [V. 4]

*$1,500 Prize Story.*

*H. J. W. Dam.*

**The Iron Cross at Dead-Horse Drift.** James O. Fagan.

**"Color of Heaven."** Margaret Dodge.

**The Wizard of Red Gulch.** William M. Tisdale.

**Private Zembler.** C. B. Lewis.

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## The Tax on Moustaches.*

BY H. J. W. DAM.

THE rivalry between Vincent and Halladay was bitter enough before Miss Belmayne occurred. It then assumed an aspect almost Corsican.

Vincent was the Rome correspondent of the London *Thunderer*. Halladay was the Roman representative of the London *National*. Vincent was an Oxford man; Halladay's intellectual credentials were dated at Cambridge. Vincent was of middle height, dark, lithe, and athletic. He had an electric energy, and quick, penetrating brown eyes with a merry light in them that was attractive; also a brown moustache that approached the feminine ideal. Halladay was of stouter and flabbier build, with a blond, sharp-pointed beard, and a face like Lord Salisbury's. Lord Salisbury was, in fact, secretly his model. He was the cousin of a peer, but notwithstanding this drawback had managed to develop a value of his own, which shows his great force and determination. He was also five years older than Vincent, who was only thirty-one; and,

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in the game of life, if not of love, years have a distinct value of their own. Both men drew lavish salaries, moved in the highest society of Rome, and were polished carpet cavaliers and very popular. Both, too, had weaknesses which revealed their temperaments and are correlated forces in this narrative.

Vincent's weakness was a small sloop yacht which he kept at Naples for vacation cruises. Not having time, in the pressure of events, to love a woman, he loved this yacht. Whenever social, diplomatic, or international affairs did not command his attention, he and his pipe and the yacht had charming hours of mental communion together in his apartment. Whenever leaves of absence permitted, the three did Capri, Sorrento, Ischia, and the adjacent Turner paintings of the Bay of Naples in congenial company. On stretching seas, in the calm and gorgeous afterglow, he dreamed of a possible fair one in the nebulous future. This showed his temperament to be romantic.

Halladay's weakness was "The War Cloud in the Balkans." Whenever other news failed he would knit his editorial brow and use his portentous ink and see ominous signs of trouble in Servia, Bulgaria, and the Balkan Provinces. One can always see ominous signs of trouble in Servia, Bulgaria, and the Balkan Provinces, and they make an excellent frame on which to hang long and sweeping periods dealing with possible international complications. From which it will be seen that Halladay was ambitious. He always used the most majestic polysyllables that fitted, and these won him the reputation of a powerful and far seeing correspondent, which reputation he confidently believed that he deserved.

These diverse temperaments caused the two men to secretly scorn each other, and this feeling was not diminished by their alternating newspaper triumphs, important bits of news from the Quirinal or the ministries, which fell now to one and now to the other, and caused the usual variations of anger and delight.

Thus it was when Miss Belmayne and her parents arrived at the Grand Hotel for the winter. Parents are, of course, of no importance, but it may be mentioned that Mr. Belmayne had made stoves, and incidentally accumulated two millions, on the shore of Lake Michigan. Miss Belmayne was one of those girls

who, without effort, bowl over unprepared Englishmen like ten-pins. She had style, Paris style, and this, when the dressmaker is driven with an intelligent curb, is very fascinating. She was fairly tall, blonde, had ideas, dark blue eyes, and a frank, sympathetic nature. All these exercised a novel and powerful influence on the two men. They met her on the same evening at a diplomatic reception. The charms mentioned were quite enough for Vincent. He went home, lighted his pipe, put on his slippers, looked at the fire and said "By Jove!" He said nothing more to the fire or anything else for two mortal hours. Then he said "By Jove!" again and went to bed. The same charms sufficed to stagger Halladay, but to them he added the two millions. He was older and more practical. He wrote his cousin the peer and told him to be sure to come to Rome that winter. Then he mentally watered his genealogical tree, resolved to lay siege to the beautiful Vicksburg with the firm patience of a Grant, and absently took a cold bath. This chilled him, at midnight, but did not check his ardor.

Miss Belmayne took Rome and the Forum and the Coliseum very seriously. This was a novelty to Vincent and Halladay, so they awoke to its grandeur, and took it very seriously indeed. They sent her books, and bronzes, and prehistoric pavements, and fragments of ancient palaces by the cartloa[illegible] Papa Belmayne, who was indulgent, said he didn't particular[illegible]e for a macadamized drawing room and engaged another roo[illegible]ld the ancient architecture. The attentions of the two men soon became constant and very marked. And through archæological mornings and afternoon drives, on the blocks of the Forum and the steps of the Coliseum, on the Pincian Hill and the roof of St. Peter's, they fell deeper and deeper in love, but kept their own counsel. The dear girl was as yet unconscious of it, but they hated each other with the hate of the 1850–60 dramas. It was anything—all—to win the adorable beauty, and sentence the other fellow to life-long despair.

The primal cause ot all the subsequent trouble was Vincent's yacht. He had, on various occasions, shown Miss Belmayne the high responsibility of his position as correspondent of the *Thunderer*. Now and then he wrote his despatches at her hotel, after

dinner, and two days later would read her the powerful, ponderous *Thunderer* editorials, which, telegraphed all over Europe, were based upon the despatches sent by him. This interested her tremendously. Like every true American girl of nowadays — in her ante-matrimonial, ante-babies-of-her-own period — she secretly longed to sway nations. To write despatches which set Europe and America in a ferment, which caused Salisbury, the German Emperor, and the Czar to instantly buckle on their skates, as it were, and dash off to do something final, seemed to her the only occupation worthy of woman or of man. She found nothing so delightful as helping him, and he knew nothing so delightful as her help, notwithstanding that the hotel note-paper was scarcely the proper stationery to bear this freight of heavy thought. When the *Thunderer* arrived she would read the despatches with a thrill of interest born of her indirect connection with the great newspaper. Finally she wanted to write a despatch — just a little one — all by herself. He, reserving rights of correction and revision, consented. It was a safe contribution, not at all sensational, about the returns of the olive crop. She wrote it. She also read it, word for word, in print, two days later. That experience was a crisis in her life. Destiny opened out its arms to her as a Woman of Might and Power. Halladay lost ground visibly after that and had emotional neuralgia of the most torturing kind.

The cause of the trouble, as before stated, was the yacht. A dirty steam-trader from Marseilles, while coming to anchor, had taken off the bowsprit of Vincent's secondary idol, together with a large slice of her peerless nose. It was like an accident to a highly esteemed female cousin. The best medical attention was instantly necessary. Vincent knew the Italians. He knew that if he did not personally arrange the contract for repairs at Naples the contractor who did them would afterwards own the yacht, bring suit against his personal fortune, and hold his family responsible for the balance of the money. In short, he had to go to Naples for two days. Miss Belmayne, strange to say, received the news with joy.

"I'll look after things. I'll send anything that's necessary to the *Thunderer*," she said.

He stared at her in astonishment.

"Oh, do let me! Please do! I want to show you the breadth of my mind."

Events were very dull journalistically. And when a beautiful girl wants to show you the breadth of her mind it is not only dangerous to say "no," but wise to say "yes," that is, if you are as much in love as he was. He finally consented and she radiated enthusiasm. "Just read the papers if you *do* send anything, and be guided by them," said he. "But don't — er — don't send *too* much, and nothing that isn't important." Then he went away to single combat with the contractor. She couldn't do him any harm. If what she sent was bad it wouldn't be printed. And his consent to the proposal would certainly do him infinite good in connection with another proposal. Thus he mused, in love, and in the train to Naples.

Now, it is doubtless fully understood by all adult persons that when an American girl desires to show the breadth of her mind she is destined to show it at all hazards. The responsibility of her position weighed heavily upon Miss Belmayne. She came down to breakfast next morning with a far-away look in her eyes and two brown prima-donna hair-curlers still nestling in the soft silken hair above her forehead. Papa Belmayne at first assumed that this was a new style in breakfast toilets and said nothing. He could never keep quite abreast of the fashions and he had made mistakes before. Then he conceived that it might possibly be an evidence of strong, disturbing emotion, and ventured to inquire. She gravely removed the hair-curlers, and after striking her hair three skilful taps put them in her pocket. Then she cautiously whispered to him the news. She, SHE, was the Acting Rome Correspondent of the *Thunderer*. Papa was startled. It flashed instantly upon his practical Chicago mind that with a wire like that something might be done in wheat. But no — on second thought — that wouldn't do. Still, he was proud, very proud, of his daughter. He proceeded to like Vincent amazingly. "We'll give the old *Thunderer* a lift, my dear, if anything happens. I'll furnish the statesmanship and you look out for the spelling and punctuation," said he. Halladay he had never liked. That gentleman's family tree and its luxuriant foliage had been exhibited several times in his presence and it annoyed

him. Not having dealt largely in trees in his career, he didn't believe in them. So Vincent stock rose clear above the hundred mark in the Belmayne family, and Halladay's fell steadily to zero, with no offers.

Halladay knew this and fumed in secret. He also guessed at once from Miss Belmayne's words and questions the foolish thing that Vincent had done. He saw in it only a clever move of his rival, and also saw a chance to spoil Vincent's chances and win Miss Belmayne with a single safe play. He was devoted but thoughtful all that afternoon. Then he went away and meditated.

At ten that evening he entered the Belmayne drawing room, sharp-pointed, immaculate, and smiling with a visible air of conscious triumph.

"Ha, ha, ha! Sorry for Vincent. Pity he's away," he said.

"Oh! What has happened? I've read all the evening papers," said the Acting Correspondent.

"Can't say, you know. Must keep a good thing to myself when I get it."

"Is it a very good thing?"

"Very."

"Is it a *big* thing?" This with fear and trembling.

"Biggest in months. May cause a rebellion in Italy. You know these Italians. Hair-trigger sort of people when anything happens that they don't quite like."

"Oh! Mr. Halladay! Please tell me."

He proceeded not to tell her, for the next half hour, in the cleverest way possible. He dangled the bait before her and cruelly enjoyed her attempts to seize it. He saw with concealed fury, however, that her anxiety was the tender anxiety that he most greatly feared. This armed him in his resolve, and having excited her curiosity till it was painful, he went downstairs.

"What is it, my dear?" said Belmayne.

Miss Belmayne was dumb with disappointment. She loved Vincent — she knew it in that moment — and he would be dreadfully beaten, without excuse, and perhaps lose his position. Because of their compact he had even failed to notify the *Thunderer* of his absence.

"I've missed the greatest news of the year," she said sharply.

"Do go down to the smoking room. They're sure to be talking about it. Follow Halladay and see to whom he speaks. We *must* get something about it."

Papa Belmayne was stout, vigorous, fifty-five, and came from Chicago. His hair was curly and showed only a few white lines. Spurred by parental love and a desire for something to do that was slowly undermining his constitution, he followed Halladay like the species of hound which is called sleuth. His eyes twinkled and his blood was up. He had always known that anybody can be a newspaper correspondent, and he enjoyed trying it. He quickly found Halladay in the smoking room and kept his eye on him. Halladay observed this and was deeply glad. It was as he had hoped. Belmayne had fallen heels over head into his trap.

Halladay was in earnest, low-toned conversation with Sir George Perleybore, a tall, thin, white-haired, perfectly groomed baronet, of any age above sixty-five, the kind of lay figure met everywhere in the best hotels of the south of Europe during winter. Sir George was astonished. Papa Belmayne saw this plainly, and lay low like Brer Rabbit. Halladay finally went away. Papa then greeted Sir George carelessly and proposed a whisky-and-soda. Also cigars. Sir George said: "Most extraordinary! Wouldn't have believed it. What'll these beggars do next!" Papa swelled with repressed eagerness. Then it all came out. He got it — every word of it — and chuckled at his own diplomacy. Then he flew to the elevator.

"Now I know what I'm talking about, my dear," he said, when her burst of joy was over. "I understand these things and you don't. I haven't been a State senator two terms for nothing. You sit down and take your pen and I'll dictate."

Papa expanded like a balloon, walked the floor, and dictated. He measured every word by cubic measurement. He dictated the short despatch four times and half of another time in all. She wrote and scratched out and turned the dictionary pages feverishly, and thought how clearly Edward would see the breadth of her mind.

And neither Edward nor the *Thunderer* knew the doom that was impending.

When the despatch was finally completed she knew that she could have expressed it much more elegantly, but papa was inex-

orable. He'd tell the story in America, by jiminy, and he wanted to read his own despatch in the London *Thunderer*. So she copied it in a bold, round hand, signed Vincent's cipher, gave it to Vincent's commissionnaire, who called at eleven, and both she and papa went to bed feeling very well indeed.

At ten o'clock the next morning — Roman time — the face of Europe wore a fearful geographical frown. Consternation, perplexity and uncertainty ruled in five empires. From Downing Street the news went under the channel to the Paris Elysée and overland to the winter palaces of Berlin, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. In her honest attempt to sway nations, the dear girl had succeeded. The Thrones sent messengers to the foreign offices; the foreign offices wired the ambassadors, and neither wire nor cable could work half fast enough to please the respective senders. When the stock exchanges opened, Italian Rentes fell six points, and their allies weakened in proportion. The smash had come. Italy was bankrupt and the Triple Alliance would fall to pieces. It all arose from a despatch and an editorial in the columns of the London *Thunderer*, those columns which were held to be as infallible as the multiplication table itself. This was the despatch: —

**ITALY.**

[From our own correspondent.]

I saw Signor Crespo this evening, and learned from him that the new and important item in the Budget, the new source of revenue which has been promised and upon which great hopes have been based, will take the form of a national tax upon moustaches. In his bill, which he will introduce in the Chamber to-morrow, it will be provided that every citizen of Italy wearing a moustache shall pay a sumptuary tax thereupon of one lira yearly. In the ordinary course this tax will yield the twenty million lire per annum which are so greatly needed and whose source up to now it has been impossible to discover. Of course a certain amount of opposition from the Left is confidently to be expected. The tax on moustaches will undoubtedly afford an opportunity to the Socialists to champion individual rights and protest against interference therewith; but, on the other hand, the clerical wing are certain to view the innovation with favor. The popular acceptation of the measure is, however, difficult to forecast.

This was probably the most nonsensical despatch that has ever appeared in any newspaper, great or small. The editor had looked at it, incredulous. The leader writer said, "H'm, it's neck or nothing with Crespo." Only Vincent's cipher and the condition of Italy made belief possible; but it was believed. This was the editorial: —

> The extraordinary course which has been adopted by the Prime Minister of Italy in order to replenish the national treasury is so radical an extension of the general principle of taxation that neither its wisdom nor its result can yet be declared with any degree of certainty. Statistics do not, unfortunately, furnish us with the number of Italian citizens who at the period of the last census were wearing moustaches. It is a well-known fact, however, that the custom of cultivating hair in an ornamental form upon the upper lip is perhaps more firmly established as a national habit in Italy than in any other country of the world at the present time. The first lesson of this proposed legislation is its certain indication of the extreme if not hopeless financial straits into which the monarchy has fallen. The second is the very doubtful character of the tax itself as a reliable source of revenue, when viewed from the standpoints of expediency and of successful enforcement. It will be necessary for legislation to establish with perfect clearness not only what a moustache legally is, but also at what age, both of the wearer and of the moustache itself, it becomes taxable; and in these two directions, to say nothing of the popular acceptance or rejection of the measure, the visible difficulties are both many and great.

On that very afternoon a man in a yachting suit went over the side of a yacht at Naples and was rowed to the pier. He was happy and buoyant with the buoyant happiness of the man who loves and is loved. Upon reaching the pier he bought the second edition of the *Corrière di Napoli* and glanced at the telegraph columns. The *Thunderer* despatch had been cabled back to Naples, and under sensational headlines was the first to meet his eye.

His first thought was that he was losing his mind and inventing the telegram. Then something flashed upon him, and his heart seemed to stop beating. He staggered to the curb of the pier, sat down and shut his eyes. He was never sure afterwards whether he fainted or not. For five minutes he knew only the

silent whirl of agonized thoughts. He grasped at once what had happened. It was Halladay's work, and Halladay had ruined him. The *Thunderer* was the laughing stock of Europe, and he, as the responsible sender of that despatch, was journalistically done for. Ambition spoke first, and the pain was of the bitterest. Love spoke next, but with all his rage and despair he could not find the power to be harsh to Miss Belmayne. "The dear girl!" he said. "She did her best, and that scoundrel fooled her completely. Oh, oh, oh!" And he squeezed his head with his hands as if to shut out the thought of his position and the inevitable consequences that he must face.

A little knot of loungers had gathered, his evident pain exciting their sympathy. This recalled him to himself, and he took a cab and drove away. Little knots of men stood in front of all the cafés, excitedly discussing the new tax. Half of them were clean shaven for the first time in their lives and the rest were about to be. There was a run on every hairdresser's shop in Naples. The Italian is poor, the taxes are killing, and the art of dodging them is the first thing taught to children. Vincent still held the paper and now read its comments on the tax. They combined a scream of sarcastic laughter with a howl of furious rage. Italy had been touched on the spot that was tenderest. But — and here was a gleam of hope — the reputation of the *Thunderer* was so high that the despatch had been taken seriously. The "sell" had not yet been exposed. If only Crespo would save him — but no! Crespo's position, already imperiled by a crisis, was worse than his own. Crespo would want to shoot him on the spot.

He caught the 2.40 train and rode to Rome in a state of numbness. What he would do to Halladay he did not dare to think. He was a man in a rage, a hungry, thirsty rage, that threatened to overpower him. Nor did he dare to go to his apartment. There lay the telegram dismissing him in derision and contempt. In his sorrow his heart turned to love for consolation. Arrived at Rome, he drove to the hotel, entered Miss Belmayne's drawing room with a white, sad face, and sat in the shadow.

The Acting Correspondent came in radiant, beaming with pride and pleasure over her shrewdness and success.

"Have you seen it? It's in the Roman papers. You didn't

get beaten. Oh, I was *so* worried and *so* happy when I knew you were safe!"

She stopped, mystified at his silence. Then she saw his pallor and his expression.

"Are you ill? What is it? What's the matter?"

He tried to spare her; tried to pass the matter over lightly. But the moment she knew that the despatch had caused his trouble all subterfuges were useless. Her face, too, grew white, and she kept on asking him question after question, till she fully understood the effect of what she had done. His ruin was certain, but his replies were gentle, quiet, and full of sympathy. Then the society girl known as Miss Belmayne disappeared and the woman in her came out. His career was ended and through his love for her. His big, beautiful girl stood up, tried to say she was sorry, but couldn't. Her lips only quivered and wouldn't work. Then she sat down, bolt upright, on the sofa, and the tears came first creeping and then tumbling down from her eyelashes as she cried, broken hearted, without a word or a handkerchief. He tried to soothe her, to say it was nothing. "O, Edward!" was all she said.

In spite of his grief he observed the word "Edward."

Upon this interesting and unconventional social tableau bustled in Papa Belmayne, of Chicago, millionaire and newspaper correspondent. He saw a white young man and a young person bathed in tears.

"Wha—what's the matter?" said he, starting and peering over his eyeglasses.

"I'm done for, but it's all my own fault," said the young man.

Papa inquired and was told. He sat down suddenly in a state of collapse.

"If that sneak comes here again, I'll cowhide him," he said, exploding. "I'll thrash him anyhow. Anyhow!" he roared with the rage of an honest man who has been beaten at his own game.

Then several minutes of sad, solemn silence ensued, each trying to find a ray of light in the gloom.

"Why don't you see Crespo? He's a friend of yours, isn't he?" said Belmayne.

"He has been."

"Then come on. Laura, you come with us. We did it. We're responsible, and we'll take the blame. Crespo is the only man that can save you. Here! Order me a carriage!" he shouted to the maid.

The combative financier who had faced and won a hundred battles that were real battles was not to be daunted by a prime minister and a newspaper and a little thing like this. His courage, of course, infected his daughter. With father at the helm everything would, of course, be all right. It must be all right. So she hoped once more and darted away for hat pins. While waiting for her and the hat pins at the elevator another thing occurred. Belmayne put his hand in a friendly way on Vincent's shoulder and said: "Young man, don't you worry. If you have to give up journalism, you may possibly do much better than that. I know you and I like you." Vincent nodded quietly. The implied promise was well meant, but it did not appeal to him just then. They drove to the Quirinal Hill in silence. The Acting Correspondent merely asked her father if her hat was on straight. She secretly proposed to take the prime minister by storm.

Now, during all these woful occurrences Chance, which, as everybody knows, is the prime minister of Providence, was playing tricks upon another prime minister, the temporary ruler of Italy. Signor Crespo was at his wits' end over the new tax measures. In order to pass them he had to yield to the demands of the Socialist-Anarchist wing of his party, and if he failed to pass them he fell from power. One alternative was as distasteful as the other, and he was rapidly growing gray in his efforts to find a way out of the dilemma. When the *Thunderer* despatch was brought him he jumped to his feet in amazement. Then he scratched his head and said "Ah!" Then he smiled a smile of joy. He foresaw something.

Two minutes afterwards the double doors of his private room were burst open and a portly marquis, one of his enemies in the Cabinet, rushed in and said: "Crespo — for Heaven's sake —"

The prime minister said nothing.

Other high politicians of his party, rivals, and enemies, rushed in and cried: "Crespo — for Heaven's sake —"

Signor Crespo said nothing.

The King sent a noble duke hot-footed to say: "Crespo — for Heaven's sake —"

The prime minister still said nothing, but in different words.

In half an hour they were all on their knees, all the opposing elements he had spent months in trying to combine. They accepted the tax on moustaches as a fact, and saw that, in revenge on them, he was going to ruin the party. They begged him not to propose it. He consented — on conditions. They agreed abjectly to his terms, told him to count on their votes, and, when the Chamber met, passed his Budget, which they had previously agreed to defeat, by a huge majority.

This is why the prime minister, who had made inquiries, was also eager to see the Acting Correspondent who had sent that despatch. Being a devout man, however, he looked upon the real sender as Providence.

The carriage party entered the Ministry. To Vincent it seemed to be wrapped in accusing gloom. It was his farewell to the prime minister, both as friend and correspondent. Nevertheless, he wrote on his card: "With Mr. and Miss Belmayne to explain that despatch."

They were silently ushered in and stood in the great man's presence, three drooping figures, guilty and downcast. Belmayne was not happy. He was not used to cringing before anybody. Laura's eyes were full of new tears. She would sway no more nations, whatever the temptation. Vincent was pale and grave.

For some reason the prime minister began to laugh. He had not felt like laughing for three months, and he enjoyed the feeling. He laughed till the tears came into his eyes.

Vincent was angry.

"Does it strike you as comical?" said he.

"Comical! It's providential. See here," said Signor Crespo, pointing to a pile of at least a hundred telegrams. "All Europe wants information about your despatch. I mean Miss Belmayne's despatch," he said, bowing gracefully.

"Then you — you understand how it happened?"

"Yes."

"And of course you — you've exposed it?"

"Oh, no. They thought I meant it. It has saved the situation."

"What?" said Vincent, thunderstruck.

"And in return, my friend, I have saved you. The *Thunderer*, unable to get an answer from you, telegraphed me for indorsement. I sent this: —

"The *Thunderer*, London.

"In consequence of concessions from opposing elements, I shall not present my proposed tax on moustaches.

"CRESPO."

"BY JOVE!" said Vincent.

"EDWARD!" screamed somebody.

"Hurrah!" said Belmayne.

And Edward's arms were filled with sudden millinery, and two hearts were filled with deepest joy.

Two events of different kinds succeeded.

Halladay was abused by the *National* for missing the most important news of the year. When he gave a true explanation of the matter he was scoffed at. It was visibly false. He then proceeded to turn to a pale but not unbecoming green color. The doctors said liver; the cause was unrequited love.

The other event was a social function of a happy, even hilarious, character, at the Grand Hotel. This is not of importance, however, in a country where orange blossoms are indigenous.

# The Iron Cross at Dead-Horse Drift.*

BY JAMES O. FAGAN.

ON the distant eastern horizon there are banks of clouds, but they are lifting rapidly, and beneath them a pale gray light tells of the coming dawn.

The night has been stormy, but the masses of vapor overhead are now in full retreat, doubling and rolling over each other in their haste to hide themselves before the sun in all his glory comes into his dominion of day.

To the north and west stretch plains, and forever plains. To the south and east the veld still stretches, but beyond are mountains, rearing their crests without break or limit till the vision can follow them no longer. The Boers call these peaks the Witteberge, or White Mountains. The long, dark streak, winding across the plains, is the vegetation on the banks of the Orange River, on its way to pay tribute to the Atlantic, far away on the other side of the continent. You are in the northeast corner of Cape Colony, South Africa, in the days when the Dutchman began to trek away from British rule.

At your feet lies the bed of a dried-up pan, or lake, white with the salt sediment left by the departing waters. A light mist hanging over its surface lifts, and as it drifts away the strangely exaggerated forms of a group of blessboks, standing on the opposite bank, are revealed. Crowded together in a bunch, their heads in the air, they gaze at something in great alarm. Only long enough they stare to be sure there is no mistake, and then, wheeling sharply around, they dash across the plain at a reckless pace.

What has given the timid antelopes such an alarm? Only an innocent-looking piece of reed matting, a yard square, the lower corners pegged securely to the ground, and the upper supported in the air by stakes. Under the lee of this frail wall is what re-

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sembles nothing so much as a bag of meal covered with an old hide tucked in on all sides.

A jackal approaches, with elevated tail and ears erect. Even to this scavenger of the plain the object seems a strange one. He drops his nose to the hide. One sniff is enough! The inquiring ears and tail are lowered, and in two seconds the jackal has vanished.

Daylight now floods the wide expanse, and the old hide shows signs of life. It heaves and trembles and tosses, and as the result of some internal struggle one of its edges becomes unloosened, and out rolls the Missing Link! Gathering itself together, it stretches itself to its full height of scarcely more than four feet, its little eyes twinkling, turning, and darting swift glances in all directions. Its small body is smeared from head to foot with what looks like the blackest wheel grease. The skin hangs loosely in great folds, the back is hollow, and the stomach also recedes where it should project, though compensated for, perhaps, by an abnormal development in the opposite direction. The scalp appears to be always in motion, large wrinkles rolling about, and little tufts of black, greasy wool chasing each other among the ridges, while the ears, seldom at rest, are cocked and craned, and twitch themselves about in the most ludicrous fashion.

The little fellow stands for a while contemplating his shrunken stomach, with hunger gnawing at his vitals. Then he turns, as though animated by a thought, and vigorously kicks the bundle on the ground, first with one foot and then with the other. The kicking is resented by strange cackling from within, which only irritates the dwarf, who jerks away the squalid skin, revealing the helpmate of the Missing Link.

It is a Bushman and his wife, traveling from the desert north of the Moloko River and seeking safety among their friends, the rock Bushmen of the White Mountains. Though almost in sight of their friends in the hills, they are nearly famished. The Boer hunters' rifles have rendered the big game so wild that the diminutive Bushman, with his bow and arrows, finds it hard indeed to win a living. He must kill something soon, or they will starve.

Rolling up his mat and hide, the little man seats himself upon the bundle by his wife's side and points piteously to his empty stomach, saying: "Click, clack, clock!"

She imitates his gesture, but to his despairing clicking returns a negative clack. She is also famishing, but will never say die.

Though the vocabulary of these pigmies is very limited, comprising only a few clicks, snaps, and coughs, and they have no word for anything newer than creation itself, they are wonderfully expert in sign language and rude picture writing, and are, above all, perfect mimics.

Taking an arrow from her husband's quiver, the little woman drops on her knees and scratches in the sand till the rough outline of a horse appears. A wan, hungry smile flits across the man's black face, and the wife adds to her hieroglyph the unmistakable profile of a Boer hunter. Then they resume their seats, laughing like children, and play a quaint duet on tiny flutes.

Presently the woman arises and searches in the grass, soon returning with something that looks like a straw and proves to be the dwelling of a grasshopper, which she buries carefully in the sand so that nothing but the head of the insect can be seen. Leaving her husband on his knees before this fetich, she hurries to a pile of brushwood on the border of the arid lake, pushes it aside, and burrows a moment with her dusky paws, exposing a large hole of the great ant-eater. A volley of clicks and clacks brings out Something which follows at her heels as she runs back to the man and the fetich. It is the Bushman's child, and as all three prostrate themselves before the grasshopper the head of the family clicks out a supplication: —

"Lord, pity poor Bushman! Stomach empty, woman's stomach empty, boy eat grubs and snails. Big white man frighten blessboks; poor Bushman starve. White man got fat animal. See picture in sand! Poor Bushman catch him, eat him! Then make music, dance, burn juniper. Good Lord, smell; happy Bushman laugh."

Then the Bush-folk arise, and leaving a little cloud of incense floating upward before the face of their deity, are soon hastening across the broad plain toward the mountains, on a desperate enterprise.

. . . . . .

It is ten miles, as the crow flies, from the Boer camp to the foot of the Witteberge. Eight wagons, drawn up in a circle, de-

fine the limits of the laager, and just outside is a rough paddock, into which the cattle of the migrating Dutchmen are being driven as the sun goes down and preparations are made for the night. At every wagon a little group, gathered around a fire, awaits the evening meal.

As the darkness deepens a slight figure creeps through the long grass and approaches the cattle. It is the Bushwoman. Climbing to the top of the fence, she springs upon the back of a young steer, fixes her teeth in the animal's neck, and, swinging around, hangs on like a fly on the side of a wall. The half-smothered growl and angry purr of the African tiger is heard, terminating with a snap and a snarl. The Bushwoman drops to the ground and is over the stockade quicker than a Dutchman could wink.

The deception is complete. Crazy with fear and regardless of obstacles, the cattle stampede in wildest terror, while the little woman, running swiftly and bending low, makes for one side of the laager, as the Boers pour out at the other in a vain endeavor to check the rush.

Bushman and boy have done their part. While the Dutchmen are flying in pursuit of the fugitive cattle the pigmy mounts a nice fat horse, tethered to a wagon wheel, placing the boy in front of him. The woman is up behind in a twinkling, an arrow from the little quiver pricks the animal's side, and a wild dash for the mountains is begun.

With their cattle dispersed and a steed missing, the distress of the Boers is great. Surely, "an enemy hath done this." Though there is as little trace of his departure as there was warning of his approach, it is enough for the Dutchmen.

"It is the devil or his dam!" they exclaim — the Bushman or his wife.

As they gather for the never-slighted evening worship the old Boer leader, standing in their midst, thanks God that their enemy is neither a Kaffir nor a white man, nor any human being, nor even a beast of the field, but bloodless fiends, fashioned by the devil in mockery of the handiwork of the Creator. "It is a Christian duty," cries the patriarch, "to slay such imps of Satan wherever they may be found, and if, on the morrow, it should please God,

in His infinite kindness, to deliver the thieves into our hands, let the tongue be blistered that would counsel quarter!"

Then the young men prepare the elephant guns, the powder, and the buckshot, sharpen their long hunting knives, and tell of the deeds they will do on the morrow. The horses are fed, the guards stationed, and the camp sleeps.

. . . . . .

It is the forest — the untamed, untamable African forest — with its giants and pigmies, its tangled thickets, its silence and its mystery! Awful as it is in its deathly stillness, who can describe its terrors when the tempest strikes — what words translate the inarticulate voice of the mighty wilderness roused to wrath, fearful in its moanings and malignant rage?

If the forest itself had tongues, what a tale of the centuries it could reveal! A thousand years stretch backward but to the maturity of some of these hoary, moss-draped warders of the wood.

Here are caverns whose rocky walls and roofs have echoed to grim noises, one might fancy, since the birth of time, and buried in their dismal depths the darkest of the Dark Continent's dreadful secrets!

Though it is midnight, fitful gleams of firelight, filtering through rocky crevice and vine-tangled opening, reveal the entrance to a spacious cave. Utter darkness reigns without, but within great fires and resinous torches make the place as light as day.

It is the home of the Bushmen. A network of branches and rough rafters, springing from the ground, crosses the roof, and the smoke from the fires curls upward and makes its escape through labyrinthine openings. The dwarfs harbor too much cunning in their little heads to dwell in a hopeless trap. The rocky walls have been scraped and polished and decorated with rude colored pictures of men, animals, and trees.

There are six of the Bush people in the cavern — the family of three with the captured horse, and three of their kinfolk of the Rocks, a young man and two girls. The carcass of the animal has been cut up and the pieces cast into one great heap, and the revelers are dividing the spoil. One after another they throw their javelins into the air, and to each thrower belongs the portion of food into which the little missile sticks.

Assembled about the fires, each seated upon the prize drawn in this grewsome lottery, they scarcely more than warm the huge morsels of flesh at the blaze, sprinkle them with ashes, and then rend and swallow. The loose flaps of skin begin to disappear, their little bodies fill out, and gradually the haggard creatures are transformed into something almost resembling humanity. They gorge till nothing is left of the carcass but the head, and around this ghastly relic the manikins dance and make merry, as the short night melts through shadowy twilight into another golden dawn.

Morning comes — the morn of a Bushman's bridal day. The two maidens have been bidden to the midnight feast that they may display their accomplishments and agility and compete for the hand of the youth who now sits stolidly smoking upon a log. The girls advance and begin a marvelous dance, to the reed music furnished by the men. They throw themselves with wild abandon into a savage, sinuous measure, dancing first upon their feet, then upon all fours, and then, with a backward somersault, alight again upon their extremities, vigorously executing a maze of dizzy evolutions, which the eye can scarcely follow. Breathless at last, they cease their strange gyrations, only to make ready for the decisive contest of strength and endurance that is to come.

Now they face each other, standing on little mats about a foot apart. Taking half a dozen deliberate steps backward, they await a signal, at which they rush together, diving downward at the mats. Up go their heels in the air, their bodies meet in a fearful shock, and each is hurled away into her corner in a heap. Again and again is this strange, barbarous struggle repeated, until one of the young women can rise no more.

As she lies senseless and exhausted, the victor, pouncing like a bird of prey upon the passive bridegroom, binds his hands behind his back. He is blindfolded and a rope placed about his neck, and the laughing and exultant bride leads him forth in triumph toward the cave or burrow she has selected for a domicil.

Scarcely have they left the cavern behind when the loud report of a dozen rifles is heard, and the luckless bride and groom, riddled with bullets and buckshot, roll over and over in agony and disappear among the rocks below.

Knowing well what a wound from the poisonous little darts of the pigmies means, the Boers dare not enter the cavern, but light a great fire at its entrance, hoping to suffocate all who may be within. But the Bushman and his people have already escaped through secret crevices in the roof, and, securely hidden, watch the Dutch.

Rage fills the bosom of the little man of the plains, and sorrow for his slaughtered kin brings a great lump into his throat. Woe to the murderers if he succeed first in reaching the "drift" — the ford in the river at the foot of the hills which his enemies must cross on their return! Hastily examining the tips of the miniature arrows whose slightest scratch is certain death, he bends the little bow, snaps the long, keen knife, and, holding it between jaws now dripping with the foam of fury, he darts into the jungle and is lost to view.

. . . . . .

Almost imperceptible is the trail from the hills to the "drift," marked by a notch on a tree here, a notch there, here a broken twig and there a twisted bough. To cross the river the Bushman's foe must wade and swim the ford. Dense is the foliage on the river bank. Huge limbs project over the water — twenty, thirty, forty feet. Creeping along one of these branches is a lithe form like that of a black panther, writhing and twisting forward in snake-like glide.

Now the Bushman pauses, cocks his little ears, and listens intently. He has heard something, and presently his keen, twinkling eyes perceive something, and for a moment he clings motionless to the gently swaying limb as he comes into full view of eight or ten horses, saddled and bridled and tied to trees. Stretched beside them on the bank sleeping, with the brim of his great slouched hat shading his eyes from the noonday glare, is a single Boer guard. The Bushman understands. The murderers have left their horses here to await their return from the hills.

Hissing vengeance between his closed teeth, the savage cautiously retraces his way, and creeping, crawling, and gliding through the long grass, approaches his unconscious foe. Stealthily and warily he draws nearer and nearer. A little paw is advanced, the other held in the air, and the knee is drawn up and

placed gently on the ground. Slowly but surely wriggling, sliding, dragging himself along, the tall grass and reeds above him hardly wave and give no token of his passage.

Now he is within springing distance, the murderous knife still between his teeth. The keen blade glitters in the sun and then descends like the lightning bolt, and the little fiend who wields it is slashing and tearing his victim, screaming and spitting, and desists not till the mangled remains of the young Boer bear as little resemblance to God's image as do those of the hapless bride and groom, over which the wolves and vultures are now fighting, up yonder among the rocks!

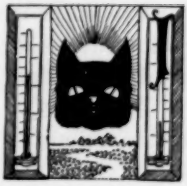
Sated with slaughter, the Bushman turns to the frightened horses, stabs each in the neck with an arrow whose wound is lethal, and chattering and chuckling runs lightly and joyously to the river's brink. Gathering himself into a ball, he springs straight out from the bank, and sinks, feet foremost, into the stream. Occasionally he comes to the surface, but quickly disappears again, and when he finally lands and rejoins his family in the vast forest, it is miles away from the scene of his dire revenge.

. . . . . .

Peaceful and civilized to-day is the vicinity of this grim tragedy. Following the great wagon road leading down to the ford, the traveler will notice a large, black-painted iron cross, with double arms, the upper inscribed "Botha's Grave," and the lower "Dead-Horse Drift." Ask the first person you meet the meaning of these words, and he will tell you this story of a Bushman's vengeance.

# "Color of Heaven." *

BY MARGARET DODGE.



IT was the last vacant hour between the removal of our effects and our own departure from the empty shell of what had been a home. Little more than a three months' camping-place that dingy half-house in a suburban limbo had seemed to us two young people, busied by day in the near-by city. But the mind reaches out unconscious tendrils to material supports. Ten minutes with blank floors and walls put us so nearly into the mood of castaways that we fled to the doorsteps to watch an unsuccessful sunset and grasp at the first subject that presented itself for conversation. This chanced to be the color of great cities. It was a fact, so my brother said, that, seen from a sufficient height, each showed its own individual tint.

"Like the years of one's life," commented a voice from the other side of the slender railing that divided our scrap of yard and doorsteps from those of the other tenant. Evening after evening that frail little elderly man had sat out watching sunsets, separated from us only by a line hardly more substantial than the equator. But never before had he acknowledged our presence save by such a courteous bow as the holder of season ticket 77, at the opera, might bestow upon number 76.

Now he continued as though taking up the thread of a nightly conversation: —

"But perhaps I am alone in that idea. I forget, when I express myself in terms of color, that all are not, as Miss Flite would say, 'a little M, my dears,' on that subject."

A certain melancholy humor in the quotation from Dickens's most lovable eccentric, an appeal like that of a lonely child in his pale, widely set eyes, drew me to cry out: —

"What a pity we had not known it before! We, too, are scientists." And then I stopped short, blushing at the thought of

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how recently the ink had dried on our diplomas from the city's famous technical school.

But with perfect gravity our neighbor responded: —

"Yes, I have heard you here evenings talking of your ambitions. A dozen times I have been on the verge of speech. Ah, well — the fear with which the young may inspire the old! Now there remains only the hour that travelers, well met, spend together in a railway station before two trains bear them in opposite directions. But will you not give that time to a visit to my workshop? There is apparatus that might be worth your while."

It did, quite literally, lack about an hour of our train time, — an hour that my brother signified we would gladly give to this belated neighboring.

Outside his door the little man paused for a look back at the western sky. Already the faint pencilings of rosy light had faded; stars, a whole skyful, pierced the muffling gloom of the suburban night.

"The night has a thousand eyes,"

quoted Ralph, half under his breath,

"And the day but one,
But the light of the whole day dies
With the setting sun."

It was our host who finished the verse, with the inflection of one who speaks his own thought, not merely repeats another's.

"Yes, that was a true word Bourdillon gave us. But the last verse, what do you make of that?

"The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one,
But the light of a whole life dies
When love is done."

"What do I make of that?" Ralph stammered, "why — a — beautiful figure of speech."

"'Figure of speech'!" The voice vibrated between scorn and tenderness. "Ah, youth, youth! Theories, all theories!

"But, pardon me" — throwing open the door — "you came not to listen to elderly monologues, but to see my workshop."

Did you ever on a ramble afield crack open a rough, dingy stone and find yourself dazzled with its lining of rainbow-flashing

crystals? It was with just such a breathless wonder that we stood in the entrance of our neighbor's workroom. Without the house, like ours, had presented a bleak, drab, unlovely wall. But here was color everywhere — a splendor of varied color, flashing from prism-hung chandeliers, gleaming from glass cubes and globes and multi-angled crystals, shimmering from heaps of spun glass, glancing from wondrously woven iridescent silken scarves, glinting from racks of jewel-tinted porcelain, playing over a wall surface that glistened with what seemed a mineral hoar-frost.

And not merely color was here, but every device for the mingling, reflection, and intensifying of hues: a revolving disk, painted with the seven rainbow tints and presenting, when in motion, only a blur of grayish white; retorts of liquid on which floated bubble-bright films; a burner in whose flame a piece of metal wire sputtered blue and gold. Besides, there were huddled upon floor, chairs, tables, sills, instruments whose use we could only guess; bottles of unknown chemicals, scientific works in English, French, German, all relating to Optics and Spectrum Analysis. In fine, for three months we had been living almost in the same house with a scientist whose laboratory betokened an awe-inspiring degree of specialization.

The wonder of it all, together with a vain regret for a lost opportunity, must have spoken in our eyes, for our host, pushing forward two unoccupied chairs, bowed deprecatingly.

"Yes," he said, leaning back against his workbench, "it is as you see; my apparatus is as nearly complete as may be in an incomplete world. Color — color — that is my fixed idea. Even as a child I could distinguish tints as a violinist can musical notes. An extra fineness of eye corresponding to the musician's 'ear,' my professors told me when I entered college. Limited they were, very limited, those men; but they helped me to the best of their ability to analyze color — its cause, production, elements — technique as complicated as that by which the tone masters acquire the theory of their art.

"And just as the real musician's thoughts translate themselves into terms of music, to me life came to express itself in terms of the prism. There were the rosy years of childhood; there were student years golden through good companionship and unbounded

ambitions; there were the sober, plodding, working years all quiet greens and blues.

"And my goal?" The man's figure appeared to settle into itself. Upon his face fell the brooding, absent gaze of those who live much in the past. Even his voice seemed to recede into years gone by as he continued: —

"You know, of course, that color, like sound, is the result of air waves or vibrations, the red at one end of the prism representing the slowest vibrations, the violet, at the other end, the quickest. You know, too, I presume, that, beyond the violet, analysis has discovered the existence of waves vibrating too rapidly to be seen — in other words, an eighth color.

"It was to discern that color" — the voice droned on monotonously as that of a child reciting "by heart" — "it was to see that shade beyond the violet that I put out of my plans all the pleasures and amusements supposed to belong to youth. I had money — a plenty. I was alone in the world — independent I called it. I was willing — there spoke youth — to give my life to research."

A nervous white hand fluttered over his heart. For a moment I feared collapse, but presently he produced from his pocket a faded leather case, which he wiped carefully with a white silk handkerchief.

"I forgot," he continued simply, "that our lives are not ours to give. Have I said there was one tint lacking in the prism of my life? But four years after college it came, too. You know what poets call it," apologetically, "'the purple light of love.'"

He laid the case gently in my fingers. Was it the glinting uncertainty of light on the old daguerreotype that gave to the girl face a look almost fatefully sweet — something beyond beauty?

"When I first saw her," he continued, "she stood in a farmyard blowing soap-bubbles for a child. One frail globe swayed above her — a miniature world in which sky and trees and grass shone all glorified. It was like that with her mind; in it the commonest things gained a beauty not their own.

"When two minds blend at a look there is no need to wait for the hour-glass. In two months we were married, and moved into this house, then far out of the world. There was no interruption

in my work; she would not have that; — but somehow she made it all seem like play. What no other woman could have done she did: — mastered the elements of my science, learned my methods, fitted herself to be my assistant in every detail. And even in our resting hours she had always a word for the rainbows that flashed from the film on still pools, or glittered winter mornings from frosted panes, or gleamed from wet sands at sunset, or shone from the pale corona of the storm-boding moon. Everywhere she saw the bow of promise. It was like living in the heart of a prism.

"Have I said that she named the hue beyond the violet? 'Color of heaven,' she said it would be.

"Four years passed like that, but with no result, at least none in the line of my search. Others — my classmates — gifted in no especial wise, were building reputations. Gradually there grew upon me the daily pettiness of those who excuse small meanness with the thought of great goals. I became a miser of hours, grudging those that went to recreation, adding daily to the periods in my laboratory.

"She made no comment, but presently I saw that the dust gathered on her piano and favorite poets, and that the time given once to them she spent in her corner of my workshop — 'at private research,' she would say, with her girl smile. But in her eyes was a look that awed me. Once before I had seen it, or thought I had seen it, on the face of a man who soon after remade science by knowledge dragged from the borderland of the unknown. The look of destiny I called it; I suppose men are prone to think those things predestined that work toward their ends.

"One day — it was ten years after my graduation — a need for fresh material took me to the city, where I spent the night. As I drove back in the early morning along the country roads, something — a radiant clearness in the air, a lustrous bloom on the grass and flowers, a caressing softness in the wind — seemed prophetic of success.

"With this presage on me I went straight to my laboratory. From within sounded the voice of my wife singing ever so softly — as another woman might sing over a cradle. Before I could push open the door the song broke off and I heard her voice, sweet as it had never before sounded to me.

"'Color of heaven! Arthur, dearest, I have found it for you.'"

The fluttering hand covered the pale brown eyes for a moment. We looked away, abashed, as is the habit of the young before any display of emotion from the old.

"Yes," he continued presently, "it was color of heaven that she saw. On her face, when I turned it to mine, was the look of one who has seen what none can see — and live."

Mechanically he took the picture, and, wiping it once more, returned it to its place.

"That was twenty years ago," he added. "In the crucible on her workbench I found nothing — not so much as a film of ashes to tell me whether she drew poison from some chemical or whether she had simply — had simply pressed too near the borderland of the unknown to return again.

"But since then it is as the song says, the light of the world is dead — dead. Literally, the green has gone from the grass and the blue from the sky.

"Still I work on, every day, every day. And sometime I, too, shall see it — the color beyond the violet, the color of heaven — and be with her."

From the brooding mood that followed he roused to accept our shy farewells.

As we hurried down, under the stars, to the railroad station we could hear quavering through the open window: —

"But the light of a whole life,
The light of a whole life dies
When love is done."

# The Wizard of Red Gulch.*

BY WILLIAM M. TISDALE.

ARTHUR ARMSTRONG, of San Francisco, was collector for the Golden Gate Iron Works, builders of stamp-mills and other heavy machinery. He was on his first trip into one of the interior counties of California, a mountainous, mining district, where the coaches of the Beaverville, Red Gulch and Gold Run Stage Company are still the only mediums of public conveyance. On this occasion Armstrong was the only passenger, for Joe Carter, the noted bandit, locally known as "The Holy Terror," had robbed the stage the day before, and the incident had caused a temporary decline in the traffic of the line. Even Wells, Fargo & Co. had no treasure to forward that day, and therefore there was no shot-gun messenger aboard.

But the driver on the morning run, from the railway station into Beaverville, was a genial fellow, and, stimulated by a few draughts from Armstrong's capacious flask and by some of his choice cigars, gave a most entertaining sketch of the robbery of the day before. Stopping at the spot where it had taken place, he described its minutest details. He pointed out the tree under which the passengers had been "lined up," while Carter had picked their pockets. Carter's style, although peremptory, was very quiet, and he had treated the passengers with great consideration, apologizing for the annoying necessity of appropriating their valuables. The driver alone had made resistance, and had not been treated quite so gently. In fact, he had been "all shot up," and was now lying at Beaverville in a critical condition. His friends were in hot pursuit of Carter, intent upon lynching him if caught.

The road to Beaverville soon leaves the broad valleys that are

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traversed by the railroad and winds for a distance through the foothills. Thence it penetrates the Sierras, leading deeper and deeper into a rugged country with small and scattered settlements, most of which are mining camps. It goes up and down long declivities, some abrupt, some gently sloping. A part of the way is shaded by magnificent forests of pine and fir. The robbery had occurred not far from Beaverville, a rude wayside station, at which Armstrong and the driver arrived an hour or so after noon. Emerging from the dining room after dinner, Armstrong found his friend, the driver, picking his teeth on the little veranda.

"I leave you here," the driver remarked.

"Sorry," said Armstrong. "I appreciated your company this morning. Who takes the reins?"

"Jim Willing, one of the best drivers on the road, and a jolly good fellow. You'll enjoy the afternoon."

When the team, six wiry broncos, was brought from the corral, Armstrong took his former seat on the box. "Good-by," he called to his late companion, reaching down a handful of cigars. "Have another?"

"Thanks. Good-by."

As the horses were attached, Armstrong heard one of the men say that there wasn't a fresh horse left, not even a saddle horse. Everything had been pressed into service in the pursuit of Carter, who had headed for Nevada. "All ready!" called the foreman of the corral force. "Where's Willing?"

Just then a man whom Armstrong had not noticed climbed quickly into the driver's seat. Without waiting to gather up the reins, which were fastened to the brake, he yelled, "Go!" in a voice like the crack of a pistol, and the horses started at a gallop, throwing aside the two men holding them. With a quick motion the driver loosened the brake and grasped the reins. As Armstrong turned to wave a farewell, he caught a fleeting glimpse of men excitedly running after them and shouting, "Whoa! Stop!" But the new driver urged the horses all the faster.

"Not much!" he said. "I don't stop fer nobody. Let the duffer be on time if he wants to ride with me!" A turn in the road and a clump of pines quickly shut their pursuers out of sight, but Armstrong fancied that he still heard them shouting.

Greatly amused at the independence of the man who dared thus defy the manager of the line, by leaving a passenger behind, Armstrong took a good look at the new driver. He was tall, wiry, and muscular; dark, with a stubby black beard, apparently of only a few days' growth. His face had a peculiar pallor, and his eyes were luminous, like a cat's in the dark. His head wobbled queerly from side to side, and the edges of a livid wound, or a deep scar, near the right temple, protruded below the slouch hat that was pulled low on the forehead. Altogether, his appearance was forbidding, even sinister, and Armstrong decided that his friend of the morning must have been joking when he predicted a pleasant afternoon. The new driver seemed anything but sociable. To the proffer of the flask, refilled at the station, he answered: —

"No, thank you; not to-day."

"Have a cigar, then?"

"Thanks, but I don't care to smoke."

Armstrong lit a cigar and puffed in silence. The driver gave his whole attention to his horses, guiding them with wonderful skill. The road was now taking them through a deep cañon, with a stream rushing down its center. There were many quick descents and sudden turns, but the driver made them all with the greatest ease, the pace never slackening. Armstrong noticed, with a curious thrill of mingled apprehension and pleasurable excitement, that he took every possible chance of an accident, yet always escaped. At the curves, he drew his horses in as closely as possible to the overhanging rocks, and sometimes the coach swung for a moment on two wheels, but it always righted itself, and the horses seemed to understand the slightest motion of the guiding hand.

Passing out of the cañon, they came to a stretch of more level country, and Armstrong improved the relatively slower gait by another attempt at conversation.

"How far," he asked, "to the next station?"

"'Bout twenty mile."

"Be there in two hours?"

"Certain; less than thet if we hev any luck. Them hosses is good fer fourteen mile an hour, an' the road's down hill 'most all the way now."

"I suppose you have heard all about the hold-up yesterday?"

"Certain. I wuz thar."

"What?"

"I wuz thar. Saw the hull shootin' match."

Armstrong thought that the fellow was lying, but he didn't like to say so. He lit another cigar and continued.

"Were you one of the passengers yesterday?"

"No."

"You surely weren't the driver? He got shot."

"No. I wuzn't the driver."

"Nor the express messenger?"

"No."

"Well, then, if you were not the driver, nor the express messenger, nor a passenger, what were you doing there?"

"Jest loafin' 'round as a spectator."

More puzzled than ever, Armstrong inquired, "How did you happen to be there?"

"Never you mind, stranger. Don't be too inquirin' 'bout other people's bizness. When I tell you thet I wuz there, thet orter settle it."

Armstrong was hurt, not so much at his companion's gruffness, as at the fact that the genial driver of the morning had so grossly deceived him. Either this was true or else he was singularly unsuccessful in finding the right side of the rough nature with which he was trying to establish an acquaintance. He made one further effort.

"Now see here, Willing, —" he commenced.

"You're mistaken," the driver interrupted. "My name ain't Willing."

"The deuce you say? Who the devil are you, then?"

"They call me the Wizard of Red Gulch, but my real name is William Murphy," said the driver quietly.

Armstrong sulked back in his seat, and in gloomy silence awaited further developments. These were soon forthcoming. They commenced to wind about the brow of a mountain preparatory to a descent on the other side of a "divide." There was forest on both sides of the road, and now and then they skirted the edges of ravines.

"I'll tell you how I got my name," said the driver, still in a quiet, monotonous tone. "I kin do things with hosses an' coaches sech ez no other feller ever done. I'll soon show you my greatest act. Jest over the hill here we go down all the way fer 'bout a mile. Pretty steep, too. They call it Long Cañon. 'Bout the middle there's a stretch of a quarter of a mile where the bluff on this side is straight down five hundred to a thousand feet. Narrow road. Jest 'bout the middle of this there's a big boulder right on the ragged edge. I turns them hosses loose an' makes it at a gallop. Ev'ry trace on this side an' both wheels hez to graze thet rock 'thout hittin' hard enough to throw us over. See?"

No, Armstrong didn't see, and didn't want to see. He was convinced now that he was traveling with a maniac. But it was too late to interfere. They had entered upon the narrow road indicated, with a sheer wall of granite at their left, and a plunge into unknown depths at their right. Armstrong caught glimpses of the tops of trees far below them, and fancied that he heard the roaring of a torrent at the bottom. He shut his eyes in despair; then opened them again, impelled by a horrible fascination. Yes, there was the boulder just ahead. The brake was jammed down hard but the horses were plunging merrily along, their heads in the air, their hoofs flying, quivering with excitement. The coach swayed and lurched, and the man who held the reins, his eyes fixed intently on the leaders, leaning away forward in his seat, was calling, with explosive emphasis, which seemed to lift the broncos into the air: "Go! *Vamos! Vamos!* Git out o' here!"

They swept past the boulder. Armstrong saw the traces touch and bound away and heard the hubs of the wheels grate against it. A few moments later the danger was past. The horses had swung around a turn in the road and were trotting quietly upon a space that was more nearly level. Armstrong wiped the sweat from his face. A little later they emerged from the cañon and the view widened on either hand. Armstrong breathed more freely.

"I knowed I could do it ag'in," said the driver quietly. "I done it ev'ry day fer three year — except oncet."

"What happened that time?" Armstrong stammered, with a desperate effort at unconcern.

The driver ignored the question. "Would you mind holdin' the ribbons a minit?" he inquired. "I git off here."

Mechanically, Armstrong took the reins. Without an instant's hesitation, the Wizard of Red Gulch stepped lightly from the swiftly moving coach and waved a farewell to Armstrong, who looked back at him, bewildered. He had expected to see Murphy roll head over heels and stop with a broken neck. But nothing of the kind occurred. Murphy stood for a moment with his tall figure sharply outlined in the glare of the dusty road-bed, a melancholy smile playing upon his cadaverous features. Then he vanished, all in an instant, and Armstrong thought that he must have plunged into the chaparral by the side of the road. He was uncertain whether he ought to stop. He had never driven a six-horse team in his life, and he hesitated a moment between desire to be rid of the maniac and reluctance to assume responsibility. A second later the horses settled the question, for they broke into a gallop again, and Armstrong found himself occupied keeping them in the road. For the first time he fully appreciated the wonderful skill of his recent traveling companion.

Having gained a certain control, Armstrong kept the horses moving along and left the Wizard to his fate. He soon entered a better country, where there were ranches of some pretensions and evidences of prosperity, and was congratulating himself that he must be nearing Red Gulch, when he noticed a dozen horsemen coming swiftly towards him. At sight of the coach they separated, ranging themselves on either side of the road. When Armstrong came up they pointed rifles at his head and ordered him to halt. He brought the six horses to a stop as quickly as he could. "Throw up your hands!" was the next command. Armstrong lost no time in complying. His captors were roughly clad, uncouth, but ready men of the mountains — not at all the sort to be trifled with. They surrounded the coach, swearing, laughing, cracking frontier jokes.

"Git up thar, Jim, an' hang on to them broncos," said a burly fellow, evidently the leader. "Jim" slipped from his horse, handed the bridle to the man next in line, mounted the box, and picked up the reins which Armstrong had dropped.

"Now then, Sandy an' Tom, git up thar, too, an' search him fer weapons." Two others climbed upon the stage. After a hasty

examination of Armstrong's clothing, they reported that there were no "shooting irons" upon him.

"The hell you say!" remarked the leader in a puzzled tone.

"Gentlemen," said Armstrong, "may I inquire the reason for this outrage?"

"Now don't try to run no bluff on us, young man," was the reply. "We're out after ye, and we've got ye. We're a-goin' to take ye inter Red Gulch, where ye'll have a fair trial. Fall in, boys. Go ahead, Jim."

Escorted by the riders and closely watched by the men with him on the stage, Armstrong made his entry into Red Gulch an hour after his sudden deposition from the proud position of driver. On the way he gathered little information, every question being met with ridicule or with indifference. He inferred, however, from the little that was said, that he was accused of stealing the horses and the stage, and was supposed to be connected, in some mysterious way, with Joe Carter.

Red Gulch is a straggling mining village. The office of the stage company is flanked on one side by the post-office and general store, and on the other by the Blue Blood saloon. As the stage and its cavalry escort came swinging down the single narrow street of the place, thirty or forty men and half-grown boys rushed forward and surrounded them. Several were armed, with revolvers ostentatiously protruding from pockets and belts. Their air of eager expectancy impressed Armstrong forcibly rather than pleasantly. At a word from Jim, when the stage stopped, he stepped to the ground. The crowd laughed and drew closer. A tall, old man, with a long, gray beard, a hooked nose, and an eye like a hawk's, waved them aside.

"Jedge," said the leader of the capturing party, "here's your man. We told ye thet we'd bring him in, dead or alive. He's a queer cuss. Didn't show a bit of fight. Cons'quently he's here to speak fer himself. We've searched him. We didn't find nothin' in the way of tools — no rifle, no revolver, not even a knife. He don't look like one of Carter's gang. But we'll turn him over to you fellers, an' you can try him. We've done our part. Now you do yourn. In my opinion, though, he ain't worth the price of a rope to hang him with. I think he's locoed."

With a look of infinite disgust and a wave of the hand which signified that he was done with the business, Armstrong's captor delivered him into the custody of the law, as represented by Judge Billings, of Red Gulch. Something in Armstrong's appearance seemed to strike the judge as irresistibly comical, and he joined in the laughter of the crowd as he laid a sinewy hand, at the end of a long, lean arm, lightly upon Armstrong's shoulder.

"So you're the bold, bad man," he said, "thet runs off with a stage an' six hosses, be you?"

"I don't understand you, sir. There must be some mistake," Armstrong replied with dignity, and shaking off the detaining arm.

"Wa'al, they telephoned from Beaverville to look out fer a light-haired, doodish duffer who hed run off with the coach, an' here you be, answerin' the description all right."

"Did they also telephone that they had sent the stage out with a lunatic for a driver?" Armstrong demanded angrily.

"No—o. They didn't say that. But mebbe thet's right. Boys, what d'ye say?"

"Looks like thet wuz 'bout right," said one.

"Let's try him fer hoss stealin', anyway," said another.

"Ask him where his friend, Carter, is," suggested a third.

"Gentlemen," said Armstrong, "you are evidently laboring under a misapprehension. If you will devote a moment's reflection to this subject, you will at once see that I could have no possible use for a coach and six horses. I have not been guilty of larceny, as you appear to surmise. I simply took the reins from the hands of a crazy driver, who deserted me several miles back, and I have brought the property of the Beaverville, Red Gulch and Gold Run Stage Company to the place where it belongs. It is I who have suffered, not you or the company. I have been frightened out of my wits this afternoon, and, if you will give me your attention for a few minutes, I will prove to you that your suspicions in regard to me are entirely unfounded."

Thereupon, Armstrong related the story of his ride. When he described the Wizard and his reckless driving, the crowd laughed uproariously. They tossed their hats in the air and yelled like madmen. Armstrong became convinced that most of them were

drunk. No one could tell what freak would seize them next. He was frightened. His voice faltered; his knees shook; but he managed to carry his narrative to the end, realizing, as he told how the Wizard had dropped off from the stage and vanished — he did not know whither — that his auditors had a reasonable foundation for their mirthful incredulity.

"You're a good one," Judge Billings remarked, when Armstrong had finished. "Well, boys," he continued, "come along an' let's talk it over. We'll settle this thing right now."

The crowd drew a little apart, and, left alone, Armstrong took a seat on the steps of the shanty that served for a stage office. He caught snatches of the comments passed upon him during the animated discussion which followed. They were such as these: —

"Slickest liar ever been in these parts."

"Queer lookin' duck, but don't look like a hoss thief."

"You bet he's ez crazy ez a loon."

While this proceeding was in progress, six fresh horses had been attached to the stage, and a new driver, a ruddy, cheerful individual, was drawing the reins over them for another start. Armstrong did not stir. He thought it better to wait until he was given permission. The driver called "All aboard!" Judge Billings came back to Armstrong.

"The boys," he said, "hez found ye guilty ez charged, but with extenooatin' circumstances. I hope you'll excuse th' informality of the perceedin's. I'm a jestice of the peace, but in these parts the wheels of jestice is mostly greased by public opinion. Some of our most influential citizens air out after Carter. Mebbe that's jest ez well fer you. If the boys thet's here don't object, I kin let ye go. Some of them thinks you're in cahoots with Carter, but they ain't proved it. We've decided to turn you loose if you'll stan' treat all 'round."

Without stopping to discuss the equity of this decision, Armstrong willingly acquiesced. Everybody filed into the Blue Blood saloon, and Armstrong paid for drinks for all. Then he climbed slowly to a seat beside the new driver, and they started amid cheers and a rattling farewell of revolver shots. In its way Red Gulch is a lively place, and Armstrong hopes to visit it again under happier auspices.

Armstrong and the new driver rode for ten minutes in silence. Then the driver said: "Thet wuz a dead cold bluff of yourn, pardner. But it worked all right, jest the same. You see the Wizard hez been dead this two weeks — two weeks ago to-day he wuz killed. He use to hev the fool trick you tell of — skinned past thet boulder ev'ry day fer three year. Skeered more'n a hundred wimmen passengers inter fits. Comp'ny discharged him half a dozen times, but took him on ag'in, fer he wuz all right 'cept fer thet one thing. But two weeks ago to-day he wuz a leetle full, I reckon. He druv too close to the boulder an' plunked right inter it. Threw him off'n the seat an' inter the gulch. Killed him dead ez Moses."

"Nevertheless," said Armstrong quietly, "I rode with him to-day."

"The boys wuz pretty hot 'bout your stealin' this here outfit afore you come up. Thought mebbe you wuz mixed up with Carter in some way. Consid'ble talk of lynchin' ye. But, you see, you didn't do no harm. Hosses blowed a leetle, but thet don't count. I reckon they decided thet you wuz crazy. Mountain air makes people crazy sometimes. No. You can't come it over me. I see Murphy arter he wuz picked up. His head wuz smashed an' his neck wuz broke. He wuz ez dead ez Cap'n Kidd. We planted him at Beaverville. Thanks! I don't care if I do. Here's to your good health. Thet's good stuff, too. Will I hev a cigar? Cert. You ain't a-ridin' with no spook this trip, mister. Ain't thet a lovely sunset, though? See! how it flames along the mountains! Dog my cats, but thet's a daisy!"

In course of time Armstrong completed his tour and returned to San Francisco, but for weeks afterwards, in his dreams, he took wild rides down Long Cañon in company with the phantom Wizard of Red Gulch.

# Private Zembler.*

BY C. B. LEWIS.

"YOU see, it's this way, sir," said the old man as he stepped out of a dark doorway and suddenly confronted a belated pedestrian; "I've managed somehow to scrape along until now, but I've reached the—"

"Hang it, man, what's up?" shouted the other, as he leaped back and raised his arm.

"I'm no thug," said the old man, as a fleeting smile crossed his face. "Lands save ye! but even if I had the will to do it, I couldn't hold up a boy ten years old. My sixtieth birthday is way behind me, and when a man is old and full of pains and aches, and his stomach has been empty for twenty-four hours, he isn't thinking of highway robbery."

"You miserable old tramp!" exclaimed the pedestrian, getting his courage up as he noted the weak old man before him, and indignant that he should have been thrown off his nerve for the moment, "why are you hiding here? It's a wonder I didn't fill you full of lead!"

"I'm purty full now, my friend, though the surgeons cut out two of the bullets. The Confederate lead fired into me at Petersburg, on the day we finally broke through Lee's lines, was meant to stay all the rest of my days."

"The old soldier dodge!" growled the other, as he looked up and down the icy and empty street.

"Henry Zembler, sir, late private in the late 10th New Jersey Infantry in the late unpleasantness, as they term it." His heels came together, his back straightened up, and he raised his right hand to salute.

"And you draw a pension and drink it up? I've met your sort before. Go to, old soaker! If you were all right you'd be in a soldiers' home, or at least drawing pension money enough to keep

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you decently. If you jump out at the next man as you did on me you may get hurt."

"Henry Zembler, late private of the 10th New Jersey Infantry in the late unpleasantness," repeated the old man as he walked along beside the other. "As to a soldiers' home, I've tried and been knocked out. Too much red tape to get in. As to a pension, my captain made a mistake. I was carried on the rolls as dead, instead of wounded, and somehow the tangle could never be straightened out. You see —"

"Look here!" said the pedestrian as he came to a halt, "it's no use to follow me and pour out the story of your woes. The town is full of tramps, most of 'em getting off the same yarn, and the wonder is that the police don't pull you all in. I've got nothing for you. Indeed, I ought to take you by the neck and crack your heels against the wall for the way you jumped out at me. I'm on my way home."

"And I'm not," was the quiet answer. "I'm the only dog in town without a home. It's hard lines when an old veteran has to come down to this, but it's the way of the world. You wouldn't miss a dime for a bed and a nickel to buy me a bite to eat, but it's not for me to hang on and pester. Along about Gettysburg days, when it was a question of who'd come out on top, a soldier was a good deal better than a dog."

The pedestrian's hand went down to his pocket. He was a young man, born after the close of the war, and what he knew about it he had gleaned from books.

"Oh, well, let it go," said the old veteran as he turned away. "After all, what good would it be? There'd be to-morrow night and nights after. If I've got to freeze and starve I might as well begin to-night. Beg pardon for the way I startled you. I was huddled up in the hallway, wishing the end would come, when I heard your footsteps. It seemed the only chance for to-night, and so I hustled out. Well, you could have called a policeman; and as you haven't done so I want to say I'm much obliged."

"If I thought you were telling a straight story —" said the pedestrian as his fingers gripped a coin in his pocket.

"Henry Zembler, sir, late private in the 10th New Jersey

Infantry in the late unpleasantness," replied the old man as he came to "attention" again. "You can't be certain of my story, sir. The town is full of tramps, as you say, and they'll tell any sort of yarn to get a nickel. I salute you, sir — good night. You are going home, and I am going — to walk!"

He turned the corner and started off. His steps were slow and uncertain, and the man watching him took notice of a limp. The clothes on his back would not have kept out the chill of a June night. He had gone a block when the other called: —

"Hello, old man — come back! I don't go much on your story, but I'll stake you for to-night."

"Late of the 10th New Jersey, sir, in the late unpleasantness," replied the veteran as he came to a halt and about-faced. "I've tried begging to-night for the first time in my life, and I'm not a success at it. About face! Forward march! Again, sir — good night!"

"He was telling me the truth, and I turned him down, poor devil," muttered the young man as he walked slowly on.

"Twos right — march!" said the old soldier as he turned the corner. "When I passed through this town on my way to the front the men crowded about the cars to throw me cigars, and every woman had a bouquet for a soldier boy. When I passed through after Lee's surrender the bands were playing, the flags flying, and the old vets owned the earth. There has been a little change in the program! No bands — no flags — no bouquets. Old vet is hunting for a coal-yard in which to make his bed. Company G — halt! Right dress. Parade — rest!"

He had stopped before a long, one-story stone building. There were openings for doors and windows, but only the openings were left. Here and there the roof was sagging, and it needed but one look up and down to show that time and decay had about done their work.

"Queer — queer!" whispered the old man. "This place has a familiar look. I wonder if — Say, I have it now! Bless me, if I haven't run across our old barracks after all these long years! True as gospel, but our regiment was quartered here for a month before we went marching away for First Bull Run. Here we are, Company G, right in front of our old home. I patrolled up and down here a dozen different nights."

He peered in at the open doorway upon heaps of refuse. As he turned his face upwards he could see the stars blinking through holes in the roof. The winter winds swept through the old rookery from end to end, and being darker inside than out, it also seemed colder in there.

"Ugh!" shivered the old veteran, "but it's better than walking the streets. Attention, Company G! Carry — arms! By twos — file left! Forward — march!"

Through the darkness and over the debris he picked his way until he reached the opposite wall and leaned his weak and weary frame against the cold bricks. There was no shelter from the chill, but the walls turned away the keen edges of the winter blasts. Here was the last battle line — here he must make his last fight.

"And what if I do freeze to death?" he asked and answered after a few minutes had slipped away. "When a man has fought his best and been downed there's nothing but death left for him, and why not freeze as well as drown? Ah! but it's not as cold as it was. And there seems to be people talking and moving about. I wonder now — I wonder if —"

"Company G, fall in for roll-call!"

"God of my life!" gasped the veteran as he straightened up, "but that's the voice of Sam Andrews, our old orderly sergeant, and the boys are falling in for roll-call."

With his back to the wall and his heels together, with his heart beating tumultuously and his eyes looking into the darkness and his ears strained to catch the slightest sound, the man waited.

"Ambler — Allen — Andrews!" called the sergeant.

"He calls the names of men who were dead after Manassas," whispered the veteran. "Yes, they died there as we fought and fell back; fought until we had fired our last cartridge, and then fell back with clubbed muskets in hand."

"Barnes — Baker — Bissell — Burrows — Blythe!"

"I remember them, I remember each one. They were good comrades and brave men. When Joe Hooker pushed into the corn-field against Stonewall Jackson at Antietam every stalk and tassel was spattered with our blood. That night there were thousands in blue and gray who did not answer at roll-call."

"Carlton — Casswell — Chadwick!"

"And they are dead — dead since the sun went down that day at Cold Harbor. I saw their faces under the moonlight that night as we fell back, and I remember how white they were. Will he call Davis — Dean — Doyle? The enemy buried them after Malvern Hill. Aye, there was a battle to be remembered forever. God! but I can see the picture before me now — the blue waiting — the gray coming on — the jaws of hell opening wide to close upon twenty thousand dead men! Yes, I can see 'em again, the blue in solid lines, and the gray charging across the meadows and up to the muzzles of our guns till the grass turned red, and in very pity we fired our last volleys over their heads. And those were our dead—Davis—Dean—Doyle. Comrades, I salute you."

"Haynes — Hemper — Hopson — Horton," called the sergeant's voice, as there was an icy rush of the midnight gale through the old barracks.

"Yes, I remember — I remember," sighed the veteran. "There were Haynes — Hemper — Hopson — Horton. He did not call Enos, Enright, or Earl. He did not call Forbush or Frayne; I did not catch the names of Graham or Gordon. But the sergeant knows — he remembers. They were dead after Fredericksburg — all dead. Why, man, there were dead men there till you wondered how a single man had been spared to limp back to our lines!"

One — two — three! About — face! One — two — three! About — face and salute! Private Zembler was a soldier again.

"Lane — Lakins — Larkin — Lampton!"

"Aye, those old names — those old comrades!" whispered the veteran. "But he did not call Isham or Ireland. He passed over Jordan — Jackson — Johnson. They fell at Gettysburg — all died by the same volley. While soldiers fought, a great nation held its breath. A few less men in blue — a few more in gray, and what of a great republic? Who will he call next?"

There was a minute of waiting, and the brown earth at the old man's feet began to whiten with the snowflakes finding their way through the roof.

"Parker — Perkins — Probasco — Pomeroy!"

"Dead — dead — dead!" groaned the veteran. "He did not call Marble or Meekins, Needham or Noles, Orton or Orville. They joked, and laughed, and sang as we marched down into the